Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale

Habitats

Humpback whale breeding, calving, & nursing grounds

Coral reefs

Sandy beaches

Key Species

Humpback whale

Spinner dolphin

Hawaiian Monk seal

False killer whale

Green sea turtle

Butterfly fish

Cauliflower coral

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale Sanctuary lies within the shallow, warm waters surrounding the main Hawaiian Islands and constitutes one 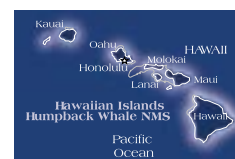of the world's most important humpback whale habitats. Scientists estimate that two-thirds of the entire North Pacific humpback whale population migrate to Hawaiian waters each winter to engage in breeding, calving, and nursing activities. The majority of humpback whales are found within 100 fathom (600 feet depth) of all the main islands. The continued protection of humpback whales and their habitat is crucial to the long-term recovery of this endangered species.

Research Activities

Whales and their habitats are the primary focus of the Hawaiian Islands Sanctuary. Whale population and behavior studies and a volunteer water quality monitoring project on Maui all work to preserve the marine mammals. Sanctuary staff are joined by sanctuary-supported graduate students in whale research.

Education Activities

Educational activities are an essential part of the sanctuary operations. Classroom and shipboard presentations, educational displays, kiosks, and videos all generate interest in the community. A sanctuary newsletter, brochures, pamphlets, and poster contest are other ways citizens participate in sanctuary activities.

Location
Within the 100-fathom isobath in the four-island area of Maui; Penguin Bank, and off the north shore of Kauai, the north and south shores of Oahu, and Kohola coastline off the Big Islands.

Protected Area
1,370-square miles

Designation
November 1992

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Above: A mother and calf humpback whale; left to right: "flying" whale; Earthtrust students; diving humpback whale